



United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

June /July 2017

SOIL HEALTH
MARKETING & OUTREACH
PAGE 4



SUMMER INTERN TOUR
PAGE 6

NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov



Planting soybeans into roller crimped cereal rye in Keokuk County.

FROM THE COVER

Want to order soil health or Helping People Help the Land bracelets for a local outreach event?

Contact Lisa Hobbs at lisa.hobbs@ia.usda.gov.



WHAT'S INSIDE?

- 3 Message from State Conservationist Kurt Simon
- 4 1% Challenge and Soil Health Tunnel
- 5 Soil Health Window Clings
- 5 Father-Daughter Duo Teach Soil Health
- 6 Summer Intern Tour
- 7 Back in the Day: Happy Retirement Barb Stewart
- 7 Meet Soil Health Team Member Kylie Berning
- 7 Adieu to Clare Lindah
- 8 Employee Spotlight: Jim Phillips
- 9 Spotlight Video: Barbara Johnson--Iowa Conservation Woman of the Year
- 9 Conservation Pioneer: Conservation Farmer of the Year
- 10 M&S Corner: Employment Verification
- 10 DSCWQ Personnel Actions
- 11 NRCS Personnel Actions

a **Message** from the **State Conservationist**



Kurt Simon,
State Conservationist

I Love Soil Health!

Welcome to the Soil Health edition of Current Developments. Soil health has been a top priority for me since moving to Iowa more than 18 months ago.

We have focused training resources, travel dollars, marketing and outreach dollars and staff time to building our ability to help Iowa landowners improve soil health. I am committed to continuing these investments. I firmly believe if we focus on building healthy soils, so many other benefits will follow:

- Improved water quality
- Higher yields
- Lower input costs
- Improved profitability
- Better risk management
- Lower flood risks

We've added a Soil Health Tunnel to our education and outreach tools. As word of mouth spreads, many festival and

special event organizers are requesting we exhibit the tunnel at their venues. If budget allows, we hope to order five more tunnels--one for each area.

The Adel Field Office just launched their soil health outreach project called the 1% Challenge. This effort encourages farmers to use conservation practices to build soil organic matter by 1 percent. We hope to launch this statewide by the end of the summer after a short pilot in Dallas County.

These are just a few of the exciting soil health developments happening within Iowa NRCS. I'm sure there are lots more... What's happening in your office? I'd love to know!

Kurt Simon
State Conservationist

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Current Developments is a product of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Des Moines, Iowa, published bimonthly by the Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Staff in cooperation with NRCS and partner agency employees from across the state.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STORIES AND PHOTOS

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Crowell at laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov. Past issues can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/ia/people/employees/?cid=nrcs142p2_008273



@IowaNRCS

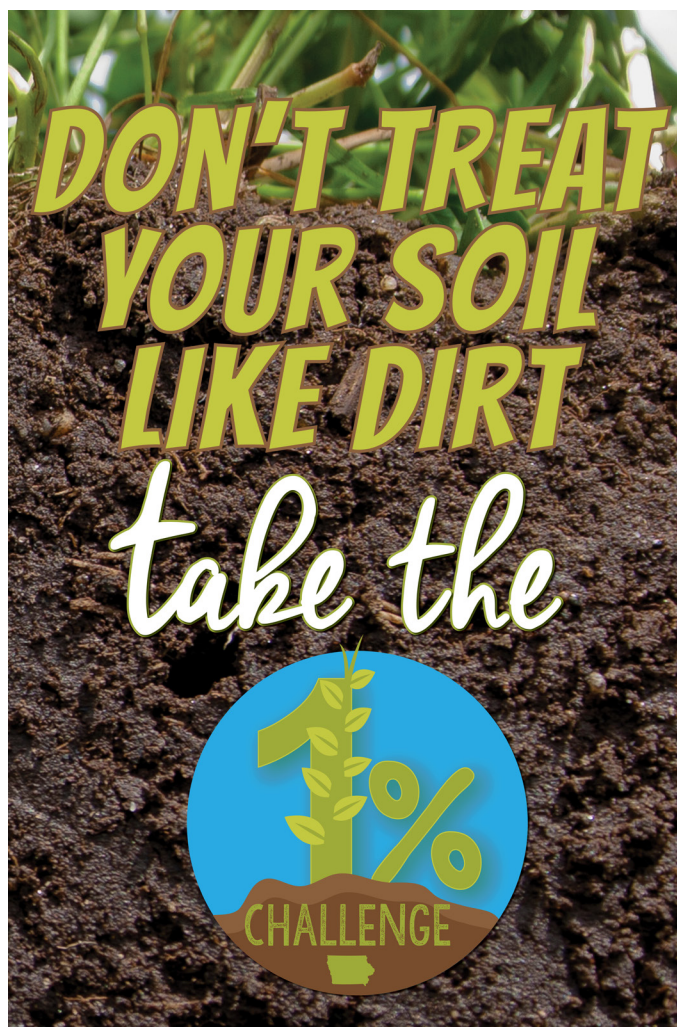


United States Department of Agriculture

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, IA 50309
515-284-4769

An equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

SOIL HEALTH MARKETING AND OUTREACH



TAKE THE 1% CHALLENGE

The Dallas County SWCD and NRCS office is launching a new soil health marketing effort called “The 1% Challenge”. The outreach idea was first conceived by the late Brad Harrison, and further developed by the Adel office staff with assistance from State Soil Scientist Rick Bednarek, former State Agronomist Barb Stewart and State Public Information Officer Laura Crowell.

The campaign encourages local farmers to sign a pledge to implement a soil health management plan with the goal of increasing their soil’s organic matter by 1%. The campaign is supported with information and marketing tools to help explain the importance of soil organic matter, how to measure and evaluate soil health and materials to help farmers keep soil health records.

After piloting the project in Dallas County, materials will be fine-tuned and made available statewide, hopefully sometime before harvest.



TUNNEL OF SOIL HEALTH LOVE

Iowa NRCS’ new inflatable tunnel helps demonstrate why everyone should love soil health just as much as we do. The 15’ x 12 x 10 tunnel is covered, inside and out, with key information about soil health and why it’s important to everyone.

The tunnel has wide audience appeal and has been used at field days, children’s events, the Iowa Speedway at the Iowa Corn300 and various county fairs.

When deflated, it weighs about 120 pounds. The fans must run continuously to keep the tunnel inflated. Because of its size, the tunnel can’t be shipped.

To reserve it for your office and coordinate pickup and drop-off, please email Laura Crowell at laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov.

MORE! SOIL HEALTH MARKETING AND OUTREACH

WINDOW CLINGS

Does your office want to recognize the conservation farmers in your county, while promoting soil health? This cling was developed by public affairs in support of an Area 4 outreach project idea suggested by Area Resource Conservationist Darrel Geib. If your office would like a supply, please contact Laura Crowell (laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov).



FATHER-DAUGHTER DUO: TEACHING SOIL HEALTH

Many Soil and Water Conservation Districts in northeast Iowa assist with Outdoor Classroom education in their counties.

This year Mike Henderson, Area 1 NRCS Agronomist, along with his daughter Dawn Henderson, NRCS EarthTeam Volunteer, presented information on Soil Health to 500 fifth and sixth graders in Sioux, Buena Vista, and Clay counties.

Henderson used the Iowa NRCS Rainfall Simulator to demonstrate rainfall effects on four different management treatments.

Those treatments included a rotationally grazed pasture, continuously grazed pasture, tilled corn\ soybean field and no-till with cover crops corn\ soybean field.

Mike and Dawn highlighted the difference between soil health and soil quality and explained how the living biology affects how well the soil can withstand rainfall.

They share how minimizing disturbance, keeping the soil covered, adding root diversity, and keeping a living root in the soil affects runoff and infiltration differences.



Dawn Henderson, NRCS Earthteam volunteer, presenting to 6th graders in Buena Vista County about Soil Health.



Approximately 50 college interns spent two days in the Des Moines area in June to attend this year's summer intern tour. The group included both Pathways (NRCS) and Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship interns. On June 14 the group weathered a good Iowa summer downpour while on a tour of the LICA farm in Melborne, participated in several soil health and water quality training stations and ended the evening at Hickory Grove Park in Colo for a BBQ. The next day the students participated in a mini-career job fair at the Wallace Building to learn about the many state and federal career opportunities in Iowa.



The 2017 summer interns pose for a group shot outside the Wallace Building on June 15.



(Left) LICA members welcome the students to their farm in Melborne. (Right) The group heads out to the CREP wetland site, just before the big downpour!

BACK IN THE DAY



Happy Retirement Barb!

This newspaper photograph of retired State Agronomist Barb Stewart was included in an article discussing the proposed Conservation Reserve Program, which was first included in the 1985 Farm Bill. At the time of this article, she was the district conservationist for the Jasper County office (One of Iowa's first women District Conservationists). She retired June 30, after 40 years of federal service.

Do you have a photo for Back in the Day? Please send it to Laura Crowell at 210 Walnut Street, RM 693 Neal Smith Federal Building, Des Moines, IA, 50309 or laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov.

MEET KYLIE!:

NEW SOIL HEALTH TEAM MEMBER



Rick Bednarek, State Soil Scientist, has a new assistant! No, not a soil scientist but a home healthcare aide. Her name is Kylie Berning.

Whenever Rick leaves the office for a meeting, conference, or a field day, Kylie comes along to provide expert care and assistance. Kylie grew up in Fort Dodge and is becoming a soil health expert!

Next time you see Kylie, please tell her hello!



(Left) Acting Director Courtney Slagle, (right) Clare Lindahl.

ADIEU CLARE: THANK YOU!

Beginning this August, Clare Lindahl will begin her new duties as CEO of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, based in Ankeny. Her last day at Conservation Districts of Iowa will be July 28. Courtney Slagle, CDI Office and Projects Manager, will serve as interim Executive Director during the hiring process for a new CDI executive director. Slagle's contact information is as follows, 1.515.289.8300, admin@cdiowa.org.

Congratulations to Clare...and thank you for five great years of partnership. Looking forward to many more as you begin your new leadership role with SWCS.



Title: GIS Specialist

College Education: 2 years at Iowa State University (80-82), 4 years at University of Iowa (82-86); Studied Engineering & Science Education (BS-General Studies, U of I)

Younger Years: Shortly after I was born in Maryville, MO, my family moved to Kellerton, IA. At age 5 we moved to Corydon, in south central Iowa, where my parents lived until 2008. I helped a local farmer intermittently tend livestock. I also enjoyed camping, hunting and fishing with my father and friends on surrounding farms. While I was a Boy Scout, I completed a conservation study involving different ground cover models. Most of what I learned about agriculture was passed on from friends or acquaintances who talked about their farm operations and experiences.

Conservation Career: My first application to the NRCS was for a technician position on the Watershed Planning staff in the summer of 1987. Because of a hiring freeze/reduction in funding, the position could not be filled and I was encouraged to look at our central Iowa field offices for possible openings. After calling several offices, Steve Manternach, DC in the Ankeny Field Office said he was looking to hire a district employee to help complete HEL Determinations. A short time later I began my first "Conservation" job working for the Polk County SWCD in Ankeny. I worked in this position a little over a year prior to being hired for the Des Moines CET position, which I held for 15 years until the fall of 2003. I then joined the GIS Staff in Des Moines and began providing statewide GIS assistance.

NRCS Goals: While working on the Planning Staff I had several opportunities to travel around the state and complete topographic and traverse surveys in areas we were doing watershed planning. This outside work was the reason I was drawn to the SCS originally. Currently I really enjoy working with many different people on many different types of projects. This includes constantly changing database, spreadsheet and GIS analysis work. I enjoy supporting our mission by helping field offices with Cultural Resource assessments or providing technical GIS assistance.

In His Free Time: I spend a lot of free time involved in our local Boy Scout and Cub Scout organizations in Monroe. Since 1991 I have lived in Monroe and served on several committees at the Methodist Church. Currently I'm serving as the chairman of the Trustees Committee. When I have time I like to swim, golf, garden and tinker around in the woodshop.

Family: I've been married to my lovely wife Kelly since 1991. She was raised in Monroe. My mother and Kelly's father both live in Monroe so it's nice to have our parents close by. Kelly and I have two sons, Logan (23) and Jacob (18). Logan lives in Farmington Hills, MI, and is studying Transportation Design at the College for Creative Studies. Jacob will begin his college studies in Science Education this fall at the University of Iowa.



Jim Phillips

MEET BARBARA JOHNSON: IOWA CONSERVATION WOMAN OF THE YEAR



Nominated by the Page County Soil and Water Conservation District, Barb Johnson is an effective, enthusiastic voice for conservation who has a strong love-of-the-land attitude and formal teacher training.

Barb practices conservation on her farmstead and has been promoting the conservation of our natural resources her entire adult life. She

has served as a soil and water conservation district commissioner and a state association board member. Barb never misses a chance to talk conservation and make a difference.

Watch this KMA radio video to learn more about Barb and her farm: [Video Link](#).

COVER CROP PIONEER: CONSERVATION FARMER OF THE YEAR

Chris Teachout of Shenandoah was using cover crops on his family farm long before they became a widely recognized and popular conservation practice in Iowa to reduce erosion and improve soil health and water quality.

While cover crops in Iowa have seen exponential growth over the past decade, growing from less than 10,000 acres in 2009 to more than 600,000 acres in 2016, Teachout was a pioneer of the conservation practice, using the cover crops from bedding for their livestock dating back to the 1980s.

Teachout's innovative approach and dedication to conservation has earned the 5th generation farmer the 2017 Iowa Conservation Farmer of the Year award, presented on July 17 during the 71st annual Iowa Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners Annual Conference in Altoona.

The award, co-sponsored by the Iowa Department of Ag and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF), honors an Iowa farmer who has a proven track record of excellence in soil conservation and water quality improvements.

In addition to being recognized with the prestigious honor, Teachout receives use of a new John Deere 6E utility tractor for a year. The grand prize is courtesy of Van Wall Equipment of Perry and is valued at more than \$12,000. Teachout will take delivery from his local John Deere dealer, AgriVision of Hamburg, and can use the tractor for up to 12 months or 200 hours.

Along with no-till acres and cover crops, the Teachout farm has more than 25,000 feet of terraces and 4.7 acres of grassed waterways, which control erosion on his farm. He's also installed riparian forest buffers

in a 7.6-acre area near his farm pond, a 2.59-acre field windbreak, and a wetland restoration project that covers 26.31 acres.

Regional conservation winners were also recognized during the annual conservation conference, showcasing the statewide commitment to conservation by Iowa farmers. Regional winners include: Tom Oswald of Cleghorn; Dwight Dial of Lake City; Greg Palmer of Waukon; Steve and Ann Brinkman of Audubon (Steve

is a former NRCS employee); Steward Baldner of Dallas Center; John Maxwell of Donahue; and Ray Menke of Ft. Madison.



Janenne and Chris Teachout accept the John Deere keys from John Graves, Store Manager of AgriVision's Hamburg location at the Iowa Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners Annual Conference in Altoona.

-By Andrew Wheeler, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation

EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATIONS

Since USDA implemented the “Work Number” program in 1997, human resource offices no longer verify employment. Through the online system, employees can authorize potential creditors the access needed to obtain information required for apartment rentals, reference checks, and short-term and major loans including mortgages.

If you are asked to verify employment, please direct the requester to contact the employee. Each employee is responsible for authorizing the release of their employment and salary information. The credit and reference verifiers must receive an authorization code from the employee in order to access their information.

Employee Instructions

1. Click on <http://www.theworknumber.com>
2. Click on “I’m an Employee”
3. Employee Login - Type “10284” (USDA Employer Code) – follow the prompts.

The following options will appear. The employee would then click on the type of service being requested:

- I want to provide someone proof of my employment only.
- I want to provide proof of employment AND income.
- I want to get my Employment Data Report.
- I want to use other account features.

On the next screen enter your SS# and PIN. Your Pin is your four digit number signifying your month and day of birth (e.g., if your birthday is September 24, your PIN is 0924).

The employee will be asked to set up an account and provide answers to security questions. Instructions on how to provide verification to the requester will then appear on screen with these instructions:

“To prove employment, follow the quick instructions below.

1. Give the lender your Employer Code.
2. Give the lender your Social Security Number.
3. Create a Salary key to give to the lender as employee authorization for release of employment.
4. Tell your lender to go to **www.theworknumber.com** and enter this information to get a verification.

Once the requesting entity receives (1) the employer code number, and (2) the employee’s Social Security Number, they can go to the Work Number web address: **<http://www.theworknumber.com>** where they will register with Work Number to access the information requested with the employee’s authorization.

Changes In IDALS-DSC PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Schmidt, Lora	Conservation Asst.	Retirement	June/29/17	Cedar SWCD
Schwartz, Pam	Conservation Asst.	Retirement	July/27/17	Polk SWCD
Strom, David	Field Representative	Retirement	June/29/17	Central Office

Central Office New Employee:

Alex Rausch – IDALS Communication Team/Information Specialist
alex.rausch@iowaagriculture.gov | Phone: 515-725-2853

Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Behr, Adam	Pathways-Engineering	Student Hire	6/11/17	Sioux City Engineering
Crile, Raeanna	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Hire	5/28/17	Tipton MU
Diaz Reyes, Carlos	Pathways-Engineering	Student Hire	7/9/17	SO Engineering
Jensen, Brian	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Hire	5/28/17	Elkader FO
Klein, Dillon	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Hire	7/9/17	Ida Grove MU
Magee, Joya	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Hire	6/25/17	Manchester, FO
Miller, Nathaniel	Pathways--Engineering	Student Hire	6/11/17	Fort Dodge Engineering
Monroe, Bailey	Pathways--Engineering	Student Hire	5/28/17	Creston Engineering
Scharnhorst, Adam	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Hire	6/25/17	Epworth FO
Sieren, Kelsi	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Hire	5/28/17	Marion FO
Stone, Joy	Pathways--Engineering	Student Hire	6/11/17	Sioux City Engineering
Weiss, Lindsey	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Hire	5/28/17	Hampton MU
Klump, Michaela	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Conversion	7/9/17	Storm Lake MU
Vanderwoude, Alisha	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Conversion	6/25/17	Hampton MU
Brady, Benjamin	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Returning	6/25/17	Sidney MU
Patten, Chrystal	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Returning	6/25/17	Winterset FO
Grube, Derek	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Returning	5/28/17	Tipton MU
Kaufmann, Lindsey	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Returning	5/28/17	Clarion FO
Klingenberg, Nicholas	Pathways--Engineer	Student Returning	5/28/17	Sioux City Engineering
Friedrich, Madison	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Returning	5/28/17	Newton FO
Recker, Alycia	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Student Returning	5/28/17	Maquoketa FO
Ehlers, Loren	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	6/11/17	Sioux City AO
Moran, Louis	Soil Scientist	Promotion	7/9/17	Sioux City AO
Leer, Kyle	Soil Conservation Tech.	Resignation	6/21/17	Williamsburg FO
Martin, Rene	Pathways--Soil Conservationist	Resignation	7/7/17	Carroll FO
Stewart, Barbara	Agronomist	Vol. Retirement	7/1/17	State Office
Stuthers, Neal	Civil Engineer	Vol. Retirement	5/29/17	West Union Engineering